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ABSTRACT

The Illinois system has been designed to continuously evaluate the total occupational programs of its LEAs. Consisting of three phases, the system involves local planning, state review and evaluation of local planning documents, and on-site visitation to the LEA conducted by a team of individuals from outside the agency. The structure of the system also allows the State Education Agency staff to monitor any changes in local programs. There are several aspects of the system which have greatly enhanced its success: (1) the total occupational program, (2) the composition of the visitation team, (3) the fact that all team members have input to aspects of the final report, (4) suggested solutions to accomplish recommendations made by the team, (5) the nature of the Summary Conference which is designed to eliminate errors in the report before printing, and (6) the built-in follow-up of the system being the One-and Five-Year Plan for Vocational and Technical Education. (Author/CK)

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STATEWIDE EVALUATION SYSTEM

ITS DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

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THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A STATEWIDE EVALUATION SYSTEM

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The urgency of collecting evaluative data to substantiate and to aid in decision making is surfacing within our educational structure. Many State Education Agency (SEA) and Local Education Agency (LEA) personnel have recognized the need to evaluate and have expressed the willingness to become involved in needed evaluative efforts. Yet leadership in evaluating local programs has in many instances been neglected by SEA officials and left almost entirely to LEA personnel. The Vocational Education Amendments of 1968--Public Law 90-576--include a specific requirement that states evaluate the vocational programs which they support. States throughout the nation have responded to this mandate with varying degrees of enthusiasm, ranging from modest to total commitment.

In Illinois a specific administrative unit has been established within the Division of Vocational and Technical Education and given the responsibility for program approval and evaluation. Emphasis of this unit was placed on the development, refinement, and maintenance of complete and total occupational programs--greatly different from the traditional emphasis on supervision of subject matter areas.

Illinois has over 600 LEA's which offer occupational programs and consume over 30 million dollars of state and federal funds annually. To encourage relevant total program planning and development, LEA's have been given the autonomy to individualize their programs to meet the needs of their students and community. A state-administered system was developed

to monitor and evaluate these divergent local programs of occupational education. The Illinois system, the Three Phase System for Statewide Evaluation of Occupational Education Programs, has the following goals:

1. To promote and assist with the development of quality occupational education programs at the local level.

2. To assure accountability of federal and state funds allocated to the local occupational education programs.

3. To provide the Illinois Division of Vocational and Technical Education and other state agencies (Illinois Junior College Board, Board of Higher Education, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction) with data upon which statewide planning of occupational education can be based.

The design of procedures to meet these goals has been characterized by a series of developmental stages involving hundreds of individuals from diverse backgrounds. (We believe this has contributed immeasurably to the acceptance and success of the system.)

Development began with several SEA-conducted workshops which included representatives from: business and industry, secondary schools, community colleges, universities, and the state advisory council. These workshops were held to gain input from various groups regarding the needs as well as procedures for evaluation. Following the initial planning workshops, a mail survey method--the Delphi technique--was utilized to determine the objectives of occupational education and to define a total program in the state of Illinois. A total program, as conceived in Illinois, has eight components or Areas of Concern. These Eight Areas of Concern will be described in detail later in this paper. Briefly,

administrative organization, personnel, objectives, evaluation, occupational programs, resources utilized, guidance services, and students served were identified as being components of a total program.

The actual evaluation system was then designed around the three previously mentioned goals and the Eight Areas of Concern. A field test of the system was made in seven representative LEA's during the 1970-71 school year. The field test led to many revisions in procedures and instrumentation and the revised system was implemented in 71 districts during the 1971-72 school year. At the close of that school year an additional workshop was held, which included the leaders of on-site visitation teams, for the purpose of further refining the system. For the current year the scope of the system has been expanded to include the evaluation of 115 LEAs.

The central theme of the evaluation system is the analysis of the LEA's total occupational program. This is accomplished through three phases--a local planning phase, a phase in which local plans are evaluated by SEA staff, and an on-site evaluation phase.

PHASE I

To implement the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968, Illinois granted autonomy for the administration of occupational education to LEAs. The first phase of the Illinois evaluation system involves staff of the LEA; their task is the planning of an occupational program best suited to their students. The key to Phase I is the total program planning conducted by the LEA staff. To aid local agencies in the planning process and to provide a uniform format for reporting, a guide for preparing Local Agency

One and Five Year Plans for Vocational and Technical Education (DVTE, 1971a) has been developed. The Local Agency Plan, completed and submitted annually to the SEA, is essentially a planning document, and also serves as a contractual agreement between the LEA and the SEA.

In addition to describing the projected individual occupational programs, the Local Agency Plan outlines the total occupational program. Identified by the plan are: the administrative organization of the LEA, a listing of personnel, the LEA's program objectives, a description of the LEA's evaluation system, a description of program offerings, a description of how the community and school resources are utilized, and a description of available ancillary services.

PHASE II

Following its preparation and subsequent review by the local governing board, the Local Plan is forwarded to the SEA. During Phase II, Regional Vocational Directors in the Division's Program Approval and Evaluation Unit review and evaluate each Local Plan and recommend an approval status to the State Director for the occupational programs within each LEA. Each LEA is considered separately as it strives to achieve its potential within its own surroundings. Such things as past performance, population characteristics, and available training opportunities are taken into account during this phase. Phase II is complete when the Local Agency Plan is given an overall approval status by the SEA.

Phases I and II of the Evaluation System are completed annually. Phase I involves the annual preparation of the Local Agency One and Five Year

Plan for Vocational and Technical Education, and Phase II involves the annual review and approval of the document by SEA personnel. The content of the Local Agency Plan is vital to the third phase of the evaluation system.

PHASE III

Phase III consists of on-site evaluations in a selected number of LEAs each year. The Illinois system concerns itself with the evaluation of the total occupational program as it exists within the LEA's surroundings. Eight total program components have been identified as being important to the success of a program in terms of meeting the needs of students. These components are assessed in terms of their contribution to a successful total program. A description of the eight components is given below.

Administrative organization is one component which contributes to the success of a total program. The term does not refer to the administrative staff per se, but instead refers to the organizational structure within which the staff functions to conduct all occupational education within the LEA.

A second component involves the personnel involved in the total occupational program of the LEA. Personnel includes administrators, instructors, counselors, and other individuals who provide services for occupational students. The staff's qualifications, working relations with other professional staff and with individuals in the community, as well as their attitudes and capabilities with regard to training students for employment are analyzed in the assessment of this component.

A third factor important to the success of the total occupational program is the extent to which comprehensive and measurable objectives

have been established for the total program. The objectives component involves objectives developed for the total program, for individual occupational areas, and for individual courses. A portion of the evaluation process consists of an analysis of the appropriateness of these measurable objectives.

A fourth component, evaluation, is directly related to objectives. Assessment of the LEA's system for evaluating the occupational program in light of its established objectives comprises analysis of this component.

The fifth component, occupational programs, involves a cursory review of programs in relation to the needs of the student population. The occupational programs component possesses an interrelationship with each of the other components.

Resources utilized is the sixth factor to be considered in the operation of a total occupational program. This includes the utilization of in-school resources, advisory committees, and other community agencies and resources (facilities and personnel).

The seventh and eighth factors are guidance services and students served. Like objectives and evaluation, these are closely related. Effective guidance services often directly determine the extent to which student needs and interests are identified and met. Emphasis is placed on determining the extent to which disadvantaged and handicapped students are being served by the LEA's programs, and on determining the role of student organizations in the program.

Staffing

On-site evaluations are conducted by a team of individuals, selected by the SEA, who are capable of assessing the eight component parts mentioned above. Each team is headed by an individual who possesses broad knowledge of occupational education and has participated in an intensive training session conducted by SEA staff. The 25 team leaders for the 1971-72 school year, and the 45 leaders during the 1972-73 school year included representatives from business and industria firms, LEA's, and universities. Each team leader conducts three evaluation visits during the school year. Team members comprise representatives from three groups--educators, business and industrial personnel, and students. To date, educator team members have included personnel from secondary and post-secondary institutions; administrators, counselors, and teachers. Business and industrial representatives have been selected from varying types of backgrounds (industrial, service, agriculture, etc.), and were often members of advisory committees or school boards from other LEAs. Student team members have been selected from secondary schools, post-secondary schools and business or industrial firms which have employed recent graduates of an occupational program. The number of team members for each school is dependent upon the size of the educational agency being evaluated. During the past two years, team size has ranged from four to twenty-four individuals.

Pre-Visitation Activities

In advance of a given visitation, the chief school administrator of an LEA to be evaluated is notified of the visitation via letter. Along with outlining the evaluation activities, the letter requests the administrator to mail a packet of information regarding the LEA to each of the team members who have been chosen for the visit. The packet includes the Local Agency One and Five Year Plan for Vocational and Technical Education, and demographic data on the school and community. This packet gives each team member a chance to acquaint himself with the activities of the LEA prior to the on-site visit.

Approximately five weeks before each visitation, the Regional Vocational Director, the SEA representative for that particular region, holds an evaluation orientation session within the LEA for all personnel associated directly with the total occupational program (administrators, instructors, and guidance personnel). This orientation has been simplified with a standardized slide/tape presentation to be followed with a question and answer period. Also during the orientation session, a questionnaire (DVTE, 1972b) is administered to each individual present. This instrument has been designed to gather information concerning the local program from those who conduct that program.

The SEA staff member also administers a questionnaire to a sample of the occupational education student body. The results of the student and staff questionnaires are summarized by computer, duplicated, and mailed to each team member prior to the visitation. The questionnaire

results, along with the material mailed to the team members by the LEA, provide the opportunity for each team member to establish a uniform baseline of information to build upon during the visit.

Visitation Activities

On-site visits, depending upon the number of attendance centers within the LEA, last either two or three days. The evening prior to the visitation, all team members meet for an orientation session conducted by the team leader. The philosophy and mechanics of the evaluation, and the available information are all discussed during this team member orientation.

The following morning, the first day of the visit, a meeting is held for team members and all staff associated with the total occupational program. The purpose of this meeting is to introduce the evaluation team and to allow the local administrator or his designee to give a short presentation pertaining to the LEA's program offerings, resources, and plans for the future. Following this meeting, the evaluation team begins interviewing individuals within the school and community according to the schedule established by the team leader. Interviews are structured through the use of a Team Member Handbook (DVTE, 1972c), divided in accordance with each of the eight components for evaluation, which identifies definite objectives that should be achieved by the team member as a result of the interviews. Since the emphasis of the evaluation is on the total program, each subject matter area is not evaluated by an individual from that specialty area. Instead, each team

member interviews a crossection of the occupational staff, academic staff, students and related personnel. In addition, advisory committee members, board of education members, and other community representatives, are interviewed to gain as many different vantage points to the local program as possible.

Preparation of the Evaluation Report.

Following the first day's interviews within the community and the educational agency, the team leader moderates a discussion of the day's findings organized around the Eight Areas of Concern. The following day or days, depending on the length of the visit, are spent interviewing and filling information gaps or voids which are identified during the team discussion.

The team leader has the responsibility of summarizing the discussions, and with the team's aid, placing the results in the format of the evaluation report which includes a section for each of the eight components. For each area a series of conclusions indicating strengths and deficiencies are listed. For each conclusion which identifies a deficiency, a recommendation and a number of suggested solutions for correcting the deficiency are listed. Prior to leaving the LEA, the team agrees upon the content of the entire report.

The LEA personnel receive the findings of the team in both verbal and printed form. The visitation culminates in the presentation of the team's findings and suggestions to a selected group of individuals responsible for administering and guiding the LEA's occupational program. A Summary

Conference moderated by one of the Regional Vocational Directors is held, with the team leader presenting the evaluation report verbally to a group of individuals comprising the Chief School Administrator, school board members, advisory committee members, and representatives of the instructional and administrative staff. The Summary Conference provides an opportunity for the local representatives to discuss the findings with the team leader, and ensures that any unsubstantiated statement in the report may be revised by the team leader prior to printing. Following the Summary Conference the team leader transmits the report to the SEA for typing, duplication and distribution. Within three weeks following the visitation, copies of the report are mailed to the LEA's chief school administrator in the quantity he has requested for distribution.

All on-site evaluations during the school year are conducted before the LEA submits its next annual One and Five Year Plan for Vocational and Technical Education (Phase One) to the SEA. This is critical to the Three Phase Evaluation System, since the next Plan provides a built-in follow-up of the LEA's activities following the on-site evaluation. Review of this Plan (Phase Two) in light of the recommendations in the Evaluation Report enables SEA personnel to monitor progress in the LEA toward achieving any recommended improvements. If action is not apparent on the part of the LEA to correct identified deficiencies, action concerning funding of programs is taken by the SEA. LEA autonomy carries with it the responsibility of accountability for program offerings.

STATE LEVEL EVALUATION

In addition to general recommendations and suggested solutions for LEAs, local evaluation provides input for state level evaluation. The need for evaluation at the state level is evident. Discrepancies or weaknesses which occur in most or all LEAs may indicate weakness in preservice or inservice training for educators, rather than local deficiency. The data collected from each of the schools visited is compiled and summarized to determine the status of occupational education within the state of Illinois. Data obtained from the One and Five Year Plans, the School and Community Data Form, the Pre-Evaluation Instrument results, and certain aspects of the local Evaluation Reports are summarized by computer. Summaries of the year's data are provided each of the team leaders for their review. A three-day workshop is held in late spring, involving each of the team leaders. The purpose of this workshop is to prepare a Composite Evaluation Report (DVTE, 1972d) and to refine the evaluation system. The statewide evaluation report is completed with a format similar to the local agency report, with conclusions, recommendations, and suggested solutions. The report is written with three audiences in mind: the SEA, institutions of higher education, and LEA personnel. The report points up actions which should be taken by each of the groups in an attempt to remedy the statewide weaknesses. The state level evaluation report serves as a planning document in the same manner as the local report serves the local agency.

RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION SYSTEM

Although the on-site phase of the Evaluation System was only fully implemented during the 1971-72 school year, review of subsequent One- and Five-Year Plans for Vocational and Technical Education has pointed up considerable impact on local programs in the evaluated districts. The One- and Five-Year Plan is a built-in follow-up to each evaluation, and is probably the single most important factor in ensuring the success of the evaluation system. Some brief examples will help to illustrate the types of changes the system has brought about in terms of the objectives that were established for it.

Objective 1: To promote and assist with the development of quality occupational education programs at the local level.

1. The involvement of students, community personnel, and LEA staff in planning programs has markedly increased in the LEAs which were evaluated during the past school year. This program planning has centered around the development of the One- and Five-Year Plan; and involvement in planning has greatly increased the awareness of the concept of a total occupational program within the LEA.

2. Serious consideration has been given by many LEAs to the administrative organization for occupational programs. The result in many cases has been total reorganization, appointment of a local vocational director with sufficient time to coordinate the programs, or clarification of the job description of the person called vocational director.

3. It is becoming apparent that evaluations have acquainted many administrators for the first time with the concept of total occupational programs. Involvement of Board of Education members in the evaluation has also increased their knowledge of the importance of the total program.

4. Increased utilization of community resources has become apparent, as the advisory committee concept has expanded. In addition, the utilization of community people and facilities in instruction is expanding. School personnel are discovering that community people are willing to help in the training of students for employment.

5. Locally-directed evaluation systems, heretofore usually non-existent, are being developed in many LEAs. In addition to comprehensive follow-up studies of students and their employers, the systems are incorporating evaluation by advisory committees, community representatives, students, faculty, and administration. Most systems are being developed around the concept of assessing measurable objectives.

6. A noticeable change is occurring in occupational guidance services available to students. Through restructuring of guidance departments, more students of the LEA are being served. New awareness of occupational program offerings on the part of guidance staff members has helped in the placement of students in these programs. In addition, the implementation of formal job placement services has strengthened many guidance departments.

7. New awareness on the part of instructional staff members concerning the total program as opposed to their own specific program will have substantial impact on unified occupational offerings in the future.

8. One indirect effect of the evaluation system has been the inservice education experience of those who have served on evaluation teams. The effect of this has been tremendous on the growth of involved staff members. In addition, the interviews with over 1,000 business and industrial persons during evaluations have increased their awareness of the programs available to students.

Objective 2: To assure accountability of federal and state funds allocated to occupational education programs.

1. The broadening of occupational program offerings available to students has been apparent. In addition to program expansion within LEAs, more programs offered by Area Vocational Centers have been made available to students, and joint agreements between two or more LEAs have further expanded program offerings. Joint agreements are ideal for LEAs which are not presently served by an area vocational center and are unable to offer a comprehensive program.

2. The importance of the built-in follow-up to each evaluation cannot be stressed too much. LEAs are asked to respond in writing to the recommendations of the evaluation team in their next One- and Five-Year Plan for Vocational and Technical Education. This past year, 13 of the 71 districts did not comply with this request. This resulted in the non-approval of their programs. With subsequent revisions, approval was gained by these 11 secondary and two post-secondary

agencies. Some non-occupational programs and courses which were previously approved were not approved in the subsequent Phase II. Other programs which were not previously claimed by the LEA received approval and reimbursement as a result of the evaluation.

Objective 3: To provide the Division of Vocational and Technical Education and other state agencies with necessary data upon which statewide planning of occupational education can be based.

1. Consultant services available from the Division of Vocational and Technical Education have been reorganized to meet the needs identified by the evaluations.

2. The Composite Evaluation Report (the compilation of data gathered from the evaluations) serves as a document for statewide planning of Division activities. Such activities include establishing priorities for research and development, professional and curriculum development, etc.

3. Pre-service and inservice education provided by state universities are being altered to compensate for identified personnel deficiencies.

The impact of the evaluation system has been tremendous in Illinois. The success of the system can be attributed to the fact that the development occurred through a process of mass involvement of persons throughout the state.

META-EVALUATION

Planning and evaluation activities are not only important to improving educational programs, but are also essential to the refinement of a statewide evaluation system. The Illinois evaluation system was

evaluated (Wentling and Klit, 1973) through the use of several techniques; a follow-up of individuals in contact with the system, an analysis of the system by team leaders, and a long-range study of the impact of the system on Local Plans. A follow-up to the evaluation has been conducted involving individuals who have either been a part of the system or have been affected by it, including teachers, administrators, team members, team leaders and SEA Regional Vocational Directors. The follow-up was conducted through utilization of a series of questionnaires designed for the specific group being sampled. The questionnaires help evaluate team leaders, identify existing weaknesses in the mechanics of the Evaluation System, and help determine the reliability and face validity of the system.

The results of the follow-up are analyzed by the group of team leaders and, in addition to their personal experiences with the system, are used collectively to evaluate the system, resulting in written conclusions, recommendations and suggested solutions. This evaluation report is directed to the SEA staff to be used in revising and making improvements in the evaluation system for future implementation.

The impact of the evaluation system is assessed by the SEA staff members as they observe changes in the LEA's annual plan and, of course, actual changes and improvements in local programs.

SUMMARY

The Illinois system has been designed to continuously evaluate the total occupational programs of its LEAs. Consisting of three phases, the system involves local planning, state review and evaluation of local

planning documents, and on-site visitation to the LEA conducted by a team of individuals from outside the agency. The review of planning documents, as well as the on-site visit, provides vital feedback to the LEA regarding the improvement of its total occupational program. The structure of the system also allows the SEA staff to monitor any changes in local programs through review of the Local Plans. This interlinkage of phases is an important and outstanding feature of the Illinois Evaluation System.

Essentially, there are several aspects of the system which have greatly enhanced its success. These include the concept of 1) the total occupational program with its eight important component parts, 2) the composition of the visitation team which includes students and employers as well as educators, 3) the fact that all team members have input to all aspects of the final report, 4) suggested solutions to accomplish recommendations made by the team, 5) the nature of the Summary Conference which is designed to eliminate errors in the report before printing, and 6) the built-in follow-up of the system being the One- and Five-Year Plan for Vocational and Technical Education. All these factors have combined to make a meaningful, understandable evaluation system which works in Illinois.

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*The above documents are available upon request from either author.